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Danse

MATURE
READERS

Danse

"READ THIS FIRST"

By Mark Wayne Harris

This is the most difficult editorial I've ever had to write.

I know this to be true because I've been trying to get it finished for about two weeks. I wrote this *whole book* in less than two weeks

Why is this editorial so difficult? Well, whereas most writers and editors approach text pages with some degree of dread, I usually look forward to them. I think they can give extra insight concerning the story the writer wanted to tell, and let the readers in on what inspired him to write it.

And that's the problem. I have so much to say and arranging my thoughts and feelings into something coherent has been more difficult than usual. I'll give it a try, though. Finding a starting point presents no problem; I'll just start at the begining.

Sometime last year (1986) I was watching an ABC-TV talk show, *Sally*, hosted by Sally Jesse Raphael. The topic she dealt with on this particular day was homosexuality.

She did not deal with the subject the way I anticipated. She made her presentation in a way that, I freely admit, offended me initially.

As the show progressed, however, I began to understand things I was previously incapable of understanding because I was close-minded about the issue.

Two of the homosexual couples Sally had as guests that morning stood out in my mind because they had taken wedding vows in a church.

Pause. Homosexual couples taking *wedding vows* in a *church?*

There was no way I was going to listen to this, I thought. I got up to change the channel. My hand was on the knob . . . But no, I said to myself. I need to hear this, as it may improve invaluable reference at some time in the future. I am a writer.

I sat back down and tried to open up my mind, to hear another person's point of view and respect it. Who knows, maybe I'd learn something.

One of the female couples were living in a house with their children (from their respective marriages). They were raising the kids *together* as a *family unit*. I do not remember them saying anything that would have led me to believe they were bad parents, immoral, or didn't have anything but the best intentions for their kids and wanted them to grow up considerate, compassionate, well-mannered, and law abiding. I have not said that I either approve or disapprove of this, and have no intention of specifying one or the other. I remain neutral.

The other couple was interracial, a black male and a white male. They did *not* stand out in my mind because they were interracial, but because they were the first to point out that when they took their wedding vows, their

(Continued on page 32)

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Shattered Lives... Sorrow Song

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Letters: Pierre Bernard Jr.

I *HATE* RAIN. SEEMS LIKE EVERYTHING *BAD* IN MY LIFE HAPPENS WHEN IT RAINS.

IT WAS RAINING THE DAY MY DIVORCE CAME THROUGH.

IT WAS *POURING* THE NIGHT MY HUSBAND TRIED TO *STRANGLE* ME.

IT WAS *STORMING* THE DAY THE *SCANDAL* ERUPTED...

THE SCANDAL THAT DROVE ME OFF THE NYPD.

BUT IT *DID* BOOST MY CAREER AFTER I SOLVED MY FIRST BIG CASE UNDER DANSE INVESTIGATIONS.

YES, *DANSE St. CLAIR* BECAME THE HOTTEST P.I. IN THE CITY...

BEGAN TO SERVE A HIGH-CLASS, HIGH-*PAYING* CLIENTELE. THE SCANDAL BOTH *MADE* MY LIFE...

...AND *DESTROYED* IT. GOD.

IF THEY ONLY KNEW.

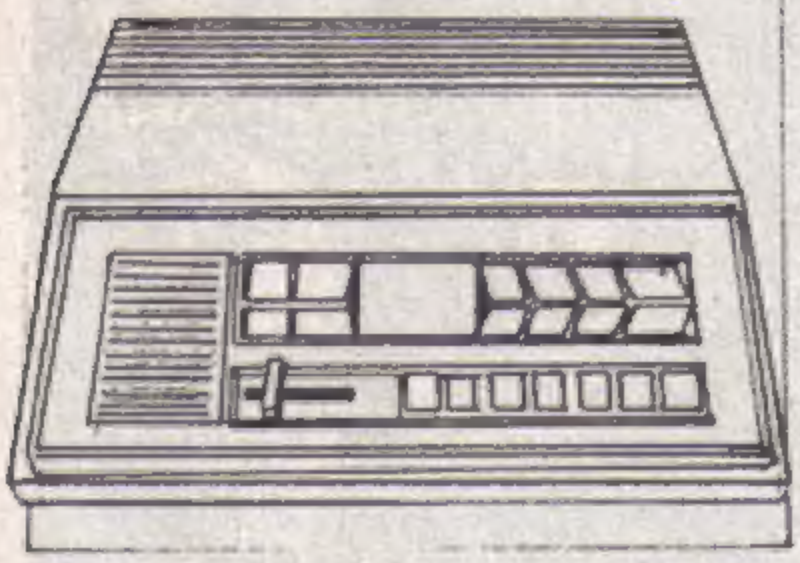
Hmph. I'M TOO TIRED TO DWELL ON IT.

I SUPPOSE MOST PRIVATE 'TECS WOULD *ENVY* MY CASELOAD--

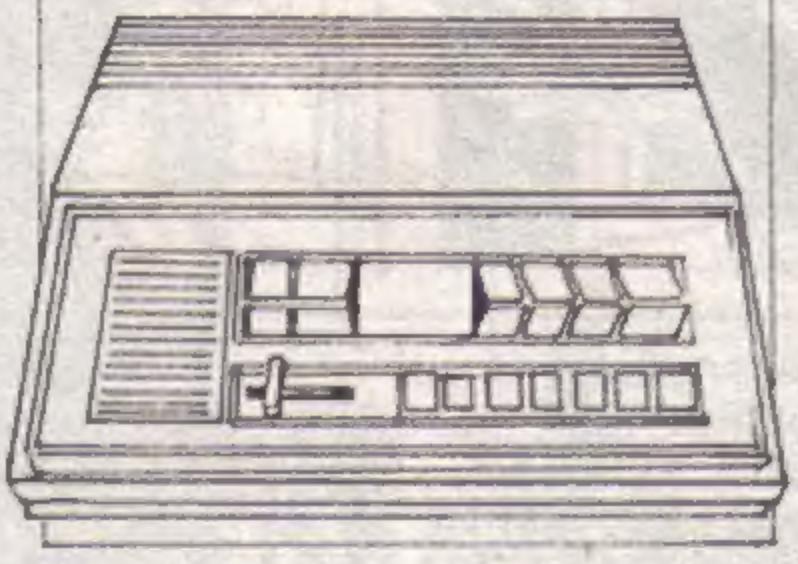
--ENVY THE UPPER CLASSES I WORK IN.

MAY AS WELL CHECK MY MESSAGES.

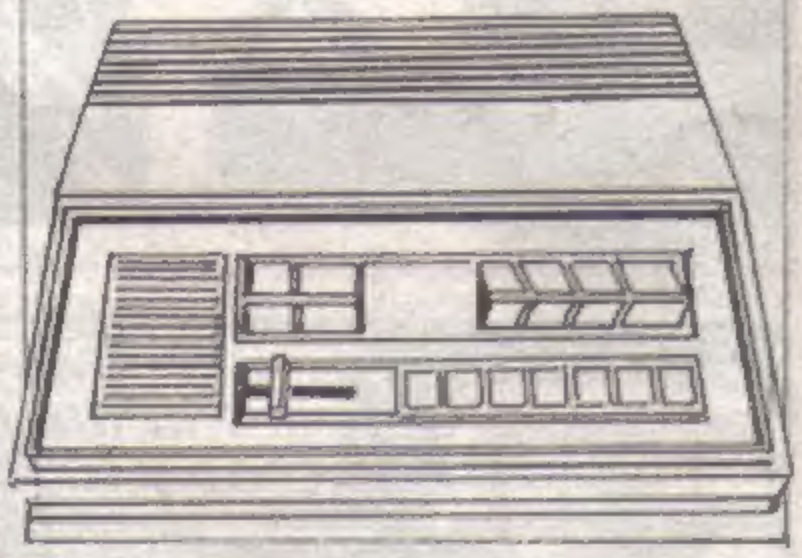
HELLO, THIS IS DANSE St. CLAIR. I'M NOT IN RIGHT NOW, SO PLEASE LEAVE YOUR NAME, THE TIME YOU CALLED, AND A BRIEF MESSAGE. I'LL GET BACK TO YOU. -beeeep-



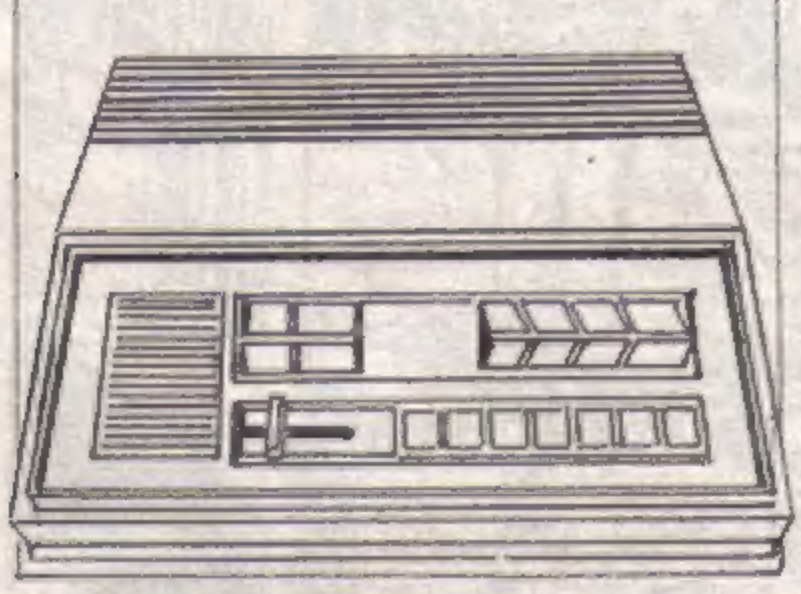
DANSE, THIS IS AUGUST HOLMES OF HOLMES INDUSTRIES. I'M CALLING AT 6:15pm. I TRIED TO REACH YOU AT YOUR OFFICE BUT YOU'D LEFT.



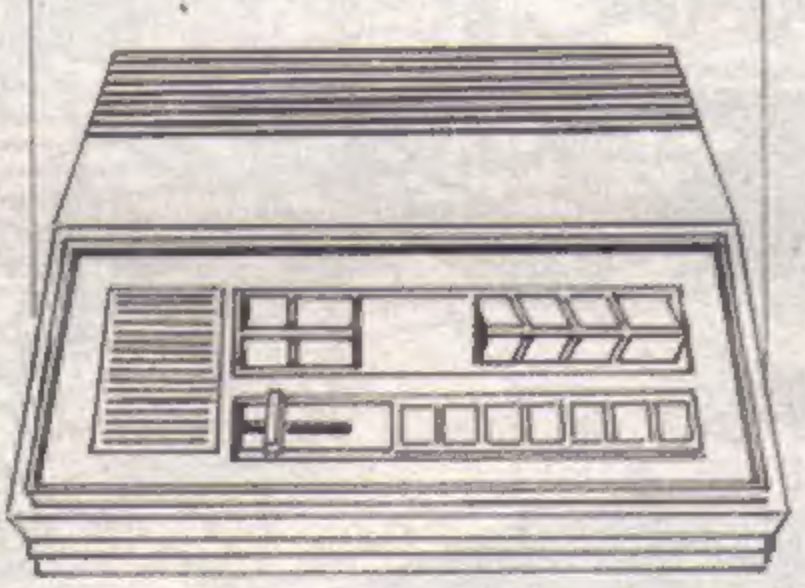
I'D *LOVE* TO HAVE DINNER WITH YOU AGAIN. YOU'RE QUITE SPECIAL TO ME, YOU KNOW. THINK ABOUT IT, ALRIGHT? GOOD-BYE MY DEAR. -beeeep-



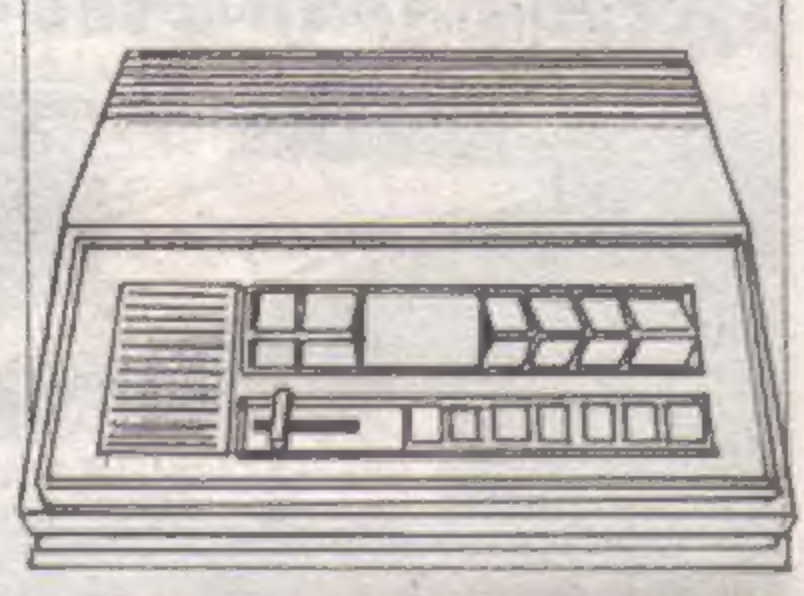
DANSE? DANSE *St. CLAIR*? JEE-*ZUS*, I GUESS I DIALED THE WRONG NUMBER. BUT HEY! I REMEMBER IT! I GUESS I SHOULD SAY... ...uh... well...



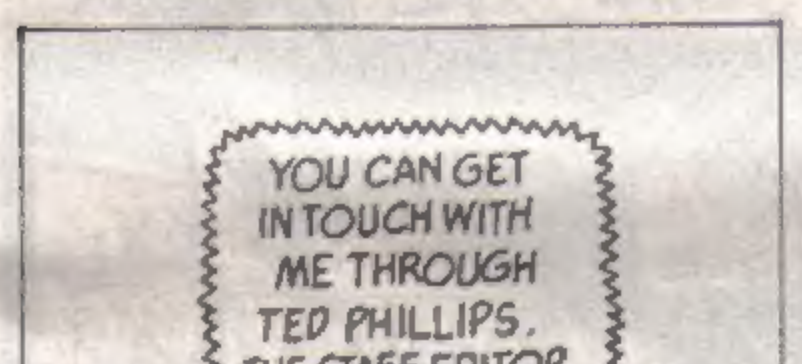
Hmmph. I GUESS I SHOULD CALL *BACK* WHEN I *HAVE* SOMETHING TO SAY! JEE-*ZUS*, I SAW YOU ON T.V. OKAY, BYE! -beeeep-



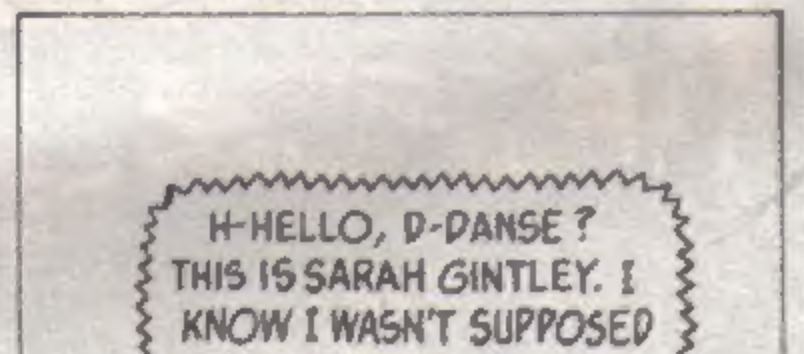
THIS IS JOYCE PRESCOTT OF THE LEDGER, CALLING AT 6:35pm. I'D LIKE TO DO A STORY ON YOU FOR MY PAPER.



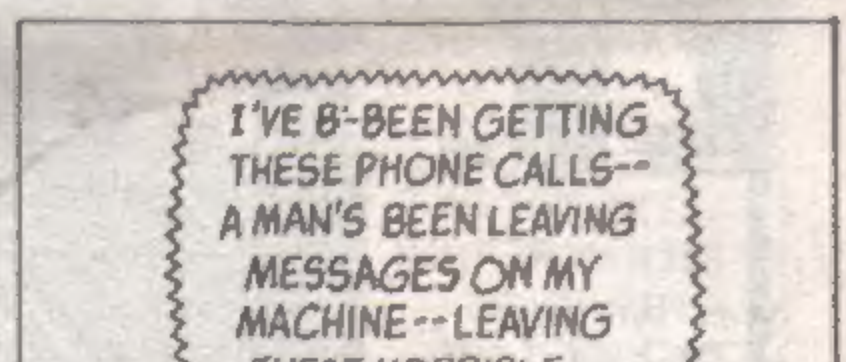
YOU CAN GET IN TOUCH WITH ME THROUGH TED PHILLIPS. THE STAFF EDITOR. HOPE TO TALK TO YOU SOON. -beeeep-



H-HELLO, D-DANSE? THIS IS SARAH GINTLEY. I KNOW I WASN'T SUPPOSED TO BOTHER YOU AGAIN, BUT--



I'VE B-BEEN GETTING THESE PHONE CALLS-- A MAN'S BEEN LEAVING MESSAGES ON MY MACHINE--LEAVING THESE HORRIBLE *THREATS*...



DANSE... I - I THINK SOMEONE'S GOING TO *KILL* ME!

P-PLEASE, CONTACT ME AS SOON AS POSSIBLE! CLICK

SARAH...

C'MON, GIRL, PICK UP THE PHONE. LET ME KNOW YOU'RE--

DAMN, NO ANSWER.

HAVEN'T SEEN OR SPOKEN TO SARAH IN OVER A YEAR. KNOWING *HER*, SHE COULD BE INVOLVED IN *ANYTHING.*

AND TO MAKE THINGS WORSE, SHE DIDN'T LEAVE THE TIME SHE CALLED.

COULDN'T HAVE BEEN MORE THAN A FEW HOURS, THOUGH. I WAS AT THE OFFICE ALL DAY. *SO...*

...SHE MUST HAVE TRIED RIGHT AFTER I LEFT.

HER HOUSE ISN'T TOO FAR UPSTATE. SHOULDN'T TAKE TOO LONG EVEN IN THIS SCREWED-UP WEATHER.

LATER...

COME ON, SARAH, ***ANSWER.*** I'VE BEEN RINGING FOR TEN--

THANK GOD. SHE WAS JUST BEING CAUTIOUS. GOOD GIRL.

DANSE! COME IN!

I'M SORRY I TOOK SO LONG, I WAS TRYING TO GET A VIEW OF YOU FROM UPSTAIRS.

HAVE YOU CALLED THE POLICE?

NO, I...CAN'T. SIT DOWN, I'LL TELL YOU ALL ABOUT IT.

AND...

I...UNPLUGGED THE LINE, I COULDN'T STAND IT ANYMORE.

SOMEONE'S BEEN LEAVING THREATS ON MY ANSWERING MACHINE.

HE'S SERIOUS, DANSE, HE WANTS TO KILL ME!

YOU DON'T KNOW HOW GLAD I AM TO SEE YOU! I'VE BEEN AFRAID TO LEAVE THE HOUSE!

I TRIED TO CALL...

I'VE KNOWN YOU FOR YEARS, SARAH. YOU'VE ALWAYS HAD A KNACK FOR GETTING INTO TROUBLE.

ALWAYS MADE THE WRONG PEOPLE UPSET.

SOMETHING I THINK WE STILL HAVE IN COMMON.

IS THAT WHY YOU WERE SO WORRIED? DO YOU STILL--

JUST PLAY THE MESSAGE, SARAH.

O-OKAY

SARAH... Y'AIN'T GOT LONG, BABE... YOU'RE LIVIN' ON BORROWED TIME...

YOU CROSSED ME, SLUT... I OWE YOU... YOU'RE GONNA DIE FOR THAT...

DON'T TRY TO LEAVE TOWN, SARAH... IF YOU DO I'LL KILL YOU ON THE SPOT... BEFORE YOU HIT THE CITY LIMIT...

...I'M GIVIN' YOU TIME... BUT YOU WON'T KNOW HOW LONG YOU GOT... YOU WON'T KNOW *WHEN* DEATH IS COMIN'... TILL IT'S TOO LATE...

BUT IT'S COMIN' ***SOON***... YOU AIN'T GETTIN' AWAY WITH WHAT YOU DID...

PEOPLE LIKE YOU DON'T ***DESERVE*** TO ***LIVE***... YOU'RE ALL ***SICK*** AND ***TWISTED***... AND ***YOU'RE*** GONNA DIE ***BLOODY***... BLOODY... BLOODY... BLOODY... CLICK-

YOU SEE, DANSE? YOU ***SEE***? IT'S BEEN LIKE THIS FOR A ***MONTH!***

CALM DOWN, SARAH. THE VOICE WAS WELL CONCEALED--MUFFLED. HE ALSO SPOKE IN A LOW MONOTONE.

STILL, DID IT SOUND FAMILIAR? DID YOU RECOGNIZE ANY SPEECH PATTERNS?

YES.

I'M ALMOST SURE IT'S A GUY NAMED ***CHRIS WELLER***. I HAD AN INCIDENT WITH HIM RIGHT BEFORE THE CALLS STARTED.

HE'S... OBSESSIVE. DOESN'T TAKE NO FOR AN ANSWER. AND HE'S ***VINDICTIVE*** BEYOND BELIEF.

REMEMBERING THAT NIGHT IS LIKE SOME HORRIBLE DREAM...

HE TRIED TO FORCE HIMSELF ON ME. TO STOP HIM--

I HIT HIM LOW AS HARD AS I COULD.

HE SAID HE WAS GOING TO *KILL* ME.

AND HE *MEANT* IT.

GIVE ME HIS ADDRESS, SARAH.

OH, I KNEW YOU'D HELP! I KNEW YOU STILL--

I'M GOING TO HELP YOU, SARAH. NO CHARGE. NO STRINGS.

THAT'S *IT.*

I...DON'T UNDERSTAND.

ARE YOU WITH *RICHARD* AGAIN? IS THAT WHY--

THAT'S NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS, SARAH. I WANT THE *ADDRESS.*

THAT'S *ALL* I WANT FROM YOU.

LATER--IN MANHATTAN...

THIS IS IT.

COMIC BOOK EMPORIUM

ROSE

Junior "I'll" '87

"TOOT" MARI

DARRELL Rene '87

Hmph. SHABBY PLACE. BUT I'M SURE HE'LL DO BETTER--

--AFTER HE SELLS THE LOAD OF *DRUGS* ON THAT TABLE.

I HOPE SARAH ISN'T INVOLVED IN THIS.

THOUGH IT *WOULD* EXPLAIN WHY SHE DIDN'T WANT THE *POLICE* TO KNOW ABOUT THE CALLS.

AND THERE'S *WELLER* EXITING THE BATHROOM.

HOLD IT!

WHAT THE F--

RAISE YOUR HANDS, WELLER, AND DON'T TAKE ANOTHER STEP.

WE'RE GOING TO TALK ABOUT YOUR THREATS ON SARAH GINTLEY'S LIFE.

HEY, I AIN'T SEEN OR SPOKEN TO SARAH IN *MONTHS*.

SURE.

I HOPE YOU HAVE SOME RECENT PHONE BILLS AROUND HERE THAT *DON'T* HAVE HER NUMBER, WELLER. IF THEY DO...

THE BULLETS IN THIS GUN START WORK ON A CONFESSION.

LOOK, LADY...

OBVIOUSLY YOU AIN'T A COP. THIS IS *PERSONAL* TO YOU.

WELL, WHAT HAPPENED BETWEEN *ME* AND *SARAH* WAS PERSONAL.

SHE REFUSED TO PAY ME FOR ALL THE COKE SHE WAS USING...

AND WOULDN'T GIVE ME ANYTHING *ELSE* EITHER.

I WAS AFRAID OF THIS.

THE PHONE BILLS, WELLER.

BEHIND YOU.

K-BRASH!

AAGHH!

RUNNHH!

AAGHH!

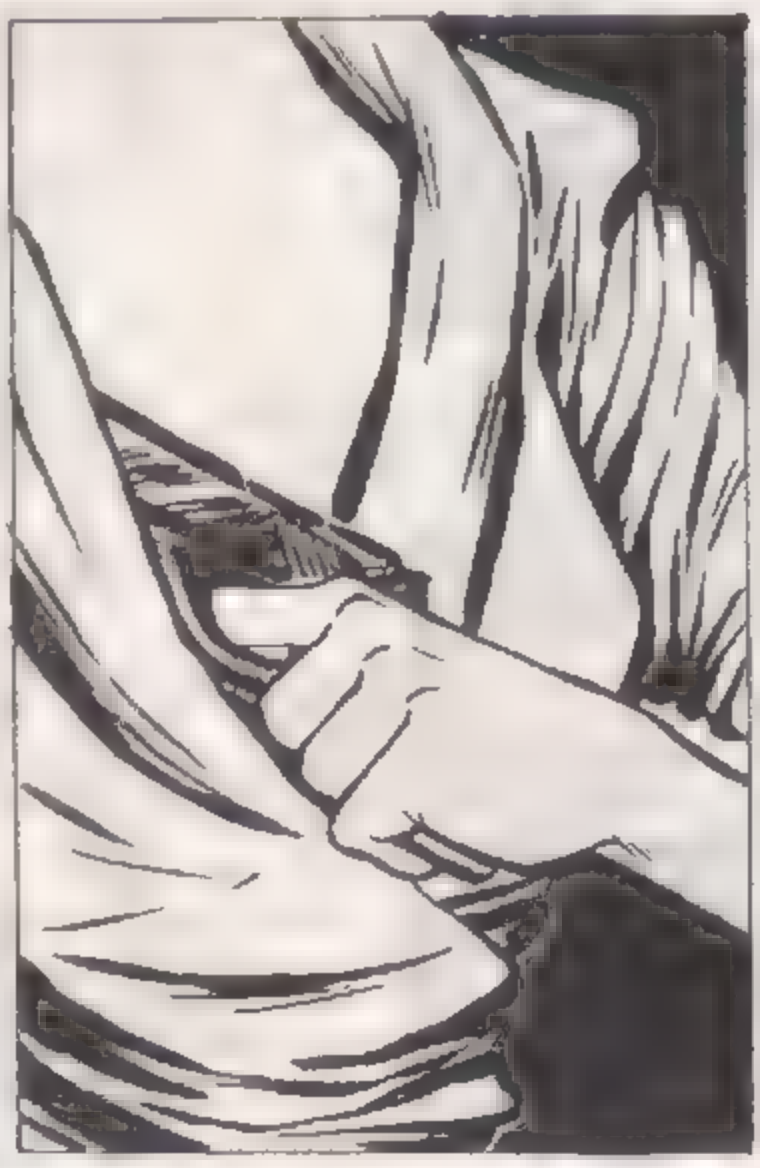
HRRLLKK!

GUHH!

L-Let--ulk!

OH GOD NO... THIS IS IT... I *KNOW* IT.

HE'S TRYING TO BREAK MY NECK!



THIRTY MINUTES LATER...

YOU EXPECT ME TO BELIEVE YOU FOLLOWED THIS GUY HERE OUT OF THE GOODNESS OF HEART?

BULL!

BACK OFF, MACK. I THOUGHT I KNEW HIM FROM A WANTED POSTER.

THINGS GOT OUT OF HAND WHEN I TRIED TO BUST HIM. I'M TELLING YOU THE TRUTH. NO CLIENTS INVOLVED.

BULL! YOU'RE LYING!

YOU'VE GOT YOUR MAN AND YOUR EVIDENCE MACK.

IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE *ME*, THAT'S TOO BAD.

WAIT A MINUTE! WHERE ARE YOU--

GOD DAMMIT, I SAID *WAIT!*

LEAVE GOD OUT OF THIS, MACK, HE'S GOT NOTHING TO DO WITH THIS. DON'T TAKE HIS NAME IN VAIN.

WHAT!?! YOU, OF ALL PEOPLE, ARE GOING TO TALK TO *ME* ABOUT *GOD*?

HE SHOULD DO US A FAVOR AND WIPE YOU AND YOUR PERVERTED KIND OFF THE FACE OF THIS PLANET!

AND YOU KNOW... I'M BEGINNING TO THINK *YOU* WERE INVOLVED IN THIS COKE THING!

YEAH, I'M GONNA RUN YOU IN!

I DON'T BELIEVE THIS!

WE WERE PARTNERS ONCE, MACK! I'VE EVEN SAVED YOUR LIFE! WHY DO YOU *HATE* ME SO MUCH?

WAS WHAT I DID THAT *WRONG*?

AFTER THE WAY YOU *EMBARRASSED* MY DEPARTMENT? AFTER THE WAY YOU--

I DIDN'T DO *ANYTHING*! YOU DRAGGED IT TO THE *PRESS*!

IT WAS *PERSONAL*. IT HAD *NOTHING* TO DO WITH THE DEPARTMENT.

OR HOW GOOD A COP I WAS!

BULL!

YOU ALMOST DESTROYED THE DEPARTMENT'S IMAGE, *MY* IMAGE!

AND ANY OTHER FRUIT WHO COMES ALONG GETS RUN OFF THE FORCE TOO!

YOU'RE *SCUM*, LEWIS. YOU CAN TAKE YOUR *EGO*, YOUR *INSECURITIES*...

INSENSITIVITY, IGNORANCE, PREJUDICE, *AND* YOUR BADGE--FOLD IT FIVE WAYS--

AND *SHOVE* IT. YOU'RE *SLIME*.

AND *YOU'RE* WORSE. YOU'RE *UNHOLY*.

Aaahhh...GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE BEFORE THE PRESS ARRIVES.

I DON'T WANT MY NAME ASSOCIATED WITH YOURS

GO!

DON'T SAY I NEVER DID YOU ANY FAVORS.

SAME HERE. AND SPEAKING OF WELLER...

YOU'RE WELCOME.

LATE MORNING.

I'M SORRY I HAD TO BRING YOU INTO THIS.

YOU MENTIONED YOUR THROAT WAS SORE. I BROUGHT YOU SOME TEA WITH HONEY.

THANK YOU.

I SEE YOU CUT YOUR HAIR. WHY?

IT WAS IMPRACTICAL. CONSTRICTING... CHOKING...

OH, DANSE. THAT'S HOW YOU GOT THOSE MARKS ON YOUR NECK. WELLER TRIED... TRIED TO...

SARAH WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME ABOUT THE DRUGS?

I TRIED TO SPARE YOU AS MUCH OF THIS AS POSSIBLE. HOW COULD I ADMIT TO YOU I WAS HOOKED ON COCAINE?

I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT DRUGS. I DIDN'T WANT YOU TO LOSE RESPECT FOR ME

BUT YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT I'VE BEEN GOING THROUGH RECENTLY. YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW HARD MY LIFE HAS BEEN.

IS THAT A *REASON* OR AN *EXCUSE*? AND I STRESS THAT THEY ARE *NOT* THE SAME THING.

NO NEED TO ANSWER THAT.

SECRETS. THEY'VE DESTROYED US BOTH IN THE PAST. IT SEEMS LIKE THE SARAH GINTLEY CURSE IS IN FULL FORCE.

WHAT CURSE?

OF ALL PEOPLE, YOU SHOULD KNOW. IT WRECKED YOUR MARRIAGE.

YOU AND RICHARD HAD SUCH A BEAUTIFUL WEDDING. THE ROOKIE COP AND THE CRIMINAL LAWYER...

THE CEREMONY MADE THE PAPERS. YOUR LIFE WAS PERFECT.

UNTIL I CAME ALONG.

I'M SO SORRY, DANSE.

I KNOW YOU WANTED YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO WORK. I KNOW YOU INVESTED A GREAT DEAL OF TIME AND EFFORT INTO IT.

ESPECIALLY SINCE YOU MARRIED RICHARD OUT OF SOCIAL PRESSURE, NOT LOVE.

WHAT? SARAH, I LOVED RICHARD!

WHAT YOU FELT FOR HIM WAS *RESPECT* NOT *LOVE*.

YOU KNOW, IT ALL SEEMED SO INNOCENT IN THE BEGINNING...

YOU HADN'T BEEN ON THE STREET A WEEK BEFORE YOU WERE SHOT DURING A ROBBERY.

I WAS WORKING IN EMERGENCY WHEN THEY BROUGHT YOU IN.

WE BECAME FRIENDS.

EXIT

I ATTENDED YOUR WEDDING. AFTERWARD, RICHARD IMMEDIATELY BECAME CONSUMED BY HIS CAREER.

IT EVEN BECAME A PRIORITY OVER *YOU*.

AS A RESULT, *OUR* RELATIONSHIP FLOURISHED...

...GREW INTIMATE...

THINGS BETWEEN US WERE SO RIGHT... UNTIL WE MADE THE 'BIG MISTAKE'.

THE ONE THAT DESTROYED US *ALL*.

YOU WERE DRIVEN OFF THE POLICE FORCE. RICHARD WAS LAUGHED OUT OF COURT. I COULD NO LONGER GET WORK AS A NURSE.

WHAT STARTED OUT AS AN ACT OF LOVE TURNED INTO A TRAGEDY.

NO ONE UNDERSTANDS. NO ONE COULD BELIEVE OUR LOVE WASN'T PERVERTED--

OR THAT WE DIDN'T PERFORM UNNATURAL SEX ACTS ON EACH OTHER.

THEY COULDN'T UNDERSTAND THAT WE HAD A TENDERNESS...A WARMTH...THAT WE WERE SYMPATHETIC TO EACH OTHER'S SORROWS...

...TO EACH OTHER'S PAIN ON THE LEVEL OF THE SOUL. THEY COULDN'T UNDERSTAND IT WAS THAT BOND THAT MADE THE LOVE GENUINE.

THE *LOVE* WAS IMPORTANT, *NOT* THE SEX.

I'M...SORRY. I DIDN'T MEAN TO RAMBLE ON. I'LL GET YOU SOME MORE TEA.

AFTERNOON MELTS INTO EVENING...

DANSE? WANT ANYTHING WHILE I'M IN THE KITCHEN?

NO, SARAH.

I REALLY HAVE TO GO. I DIDN'T MEAN TO STAY THIS LONG.

THANKS FOR THE ORANGE TEA, IT'S STILL MY FAV--

BRRINGG! -CLICK-

HELLO, THIS IS SARAH. I'M NOT HOME NOW--

--SO PLEASE LEAVE YOUR NAME AND NUMBER AND I'LL CALL YOU BACK. THANKS.. -beeeep-

TONIGHT, SARAH. TONIGHT. YOU'RE GONNA *DIE*. AND DON'T TRY CALLING THE POLICE--

--YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO. SKRAWKK!

IT'S DEAD. HE CUT THE LINE.

I-I DON'T...WHAT'S GOING *ON*?

I DON'T KNOW. STAY AWAY FROM THE WINDOWS, I'M GOING OUT TO SCOUT THE GROUNDS.

I *SHOULD* FIND HIM BEFORE HE GETS TO SARAH.

HER PROBLEMS *SHOULD* BE OVER VERY SOON.

SOMETHING'S TERRIBLY WRONG.

THERE'S ONLY ONE EXPLANATION. I *KILLED* THE *WRONG MAN*.

GREAT.

SARAH SAID THERE WERE NO PAYPHONES NEARBY. HE HAD TO TAP INTO THE LINE.

IT'S POSSIBLE THIS *NUT* DOESN'T KNOW I'M HERE.

I PARKED THE CAR A GOOD DISTANCE AWAY. WITH ANY LUCK, I'LL BE ABLE TO SURPRISE HIM OUT HERE...

HE'LL NEVER GET ANYWHERE NEAR HER.

MADE TWO COMPLETE ROUNDS OF THE HOUSE. NO SIGN OF *HIM*...

BUT THERE'S HIS CAR. THAT EXPLAINS WHERE HE CALLED FROM. CELLULAR PHONE. WHY DIDN'T I REALIZE THAT?

AND WHERE IS *HE*!?!

K-BRASH!!!

DANSE!!

NO!
LET GO!
NO!!!

STUPID!
STUPID!
STUPID!
I SHOULD HAVE STAYED WITH SARAH. SHOULD HAVE HIDDEN HER AND DRAWN THE KILLER INTO THE HOUSE! NOW--

--I MAY BE TOO LATE.

oh God no
SHUT UP!
DANSE...DANSE!
SHUT UP!

WHO ARE YOU? WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS TO ME?!

WHY?!

YOU KNOW WHY.

RICHARD!

TAKE A LOOK DOWN, SARAH. I'M GOING TO PUT A BULLET IN EACH OF YOUR EYES AND THROW YOU OFF.

YOU WON'T BE FOUND FOR DAYS.

RICHARD!?! IS THAT--

oh my lord

HELLO, DANSE I'M GLAD YOU'RE HERE.

RICHARD... *NOW* I UNDERSTAND. IT WAS *YOU* ON THE PHONE.

YOU USED SLANG TO THROW US OFF--BAD GRAMMAR...

"US"!?! WHAT THE HELL IS *WRONG* WITH YOU?!

THINGS HAVEN'T *CHANGED* BETWEEN THE TWO OF YOU, *HAS* IT?

SHE *RUINED* MY LIFE, DANSE! AND SHE'S GOING TO *DIE* FOR IT!

LET HER GO, RICHARD. I MEAN IT.

YOU ALWAYS PUT *HER* BEFORE *ME*, DIDN'T YOU?

YOU *LOVED* HER MORE THAN ME, DIDN'T YOU?! DENY IT!

DENY IT!

SHE'S JUST MY *FRIEND.*

'FRIEND'. THAT'S WHAT *I* THOUGHT IN THE BEGINNING.

I THOUGHT SHE WAS A GOOD FRIEND WHO CAME TO OUR WEDDING TO WISH US GREAT SUCCESS IN OUR MARRIAGE AND OUR CAREERS.

I SPENT *THREE YEARS* OF CONSTANT WORK TO BE THE BEST LAWYER IN THIS STATE.

I TRIED TO GIVE YOU *EVERYTHING* YOU EVER WANTED...

AND YOU REPAY ME BY LETTING THIS *PERVERTED* SLUT *SEDUCE* YOU ?!?

I GRADUALLY BEGAN TO REALIZE WHAT WAS GOING ON.

THOUGH IT SEEMED SO UNBELIEVABLE, I *HAD* TO FIND OUT FOR CERTAIN.

THEN I STARTED FOLLOWING YOU TO YOUR SECRET MEETING PLACES.

AFTER I CONFRONTED YOU WITH IT, YOU LEFT THE HOUSE. NO ONE HEARD FROM YOU FOR SEVERAL DAYS.

I BECAME WORRIED. I CALLED IN YOUR PARTNER MACK LEWIS TO HELP FIND YOU.

WE EVENTUALLY CHECKED THE CHURCH WHERE WE WERE MARRIED. HAVING NOWHERE ELSE TO LOOK.

MACK THOUGHT YOU MIGHT BE THERE FOR A FEELING OF SECURITY.

WE FOUND THE TWO OF YOU KNEELING BEFORE THE ALTAR...

...TAKING *WEDDING VOWS* BEFORE GOD.

BEFORE *GOD!*

MACK WASTED NO TIME...

COP DENOUNCES GAY PARTNER

Baynard, a professor at the Northeastern University School of Law in Boston, in 1984 co-founded

MY CAREER, MY MARRIAGE... EVERYTHING I WORKED FOR-- DESTROYED!

AND IT'S ALL HER FAULT!

oh GOD!!

SARAH!!

CHARD... HOW COULD YOU--PLEASE, DON'T MAKE ME--

KBLAM!

AAUGGHH!

uhhhhh...

POW!

POW!

uhn!

AAHHRR!

KBLAM!

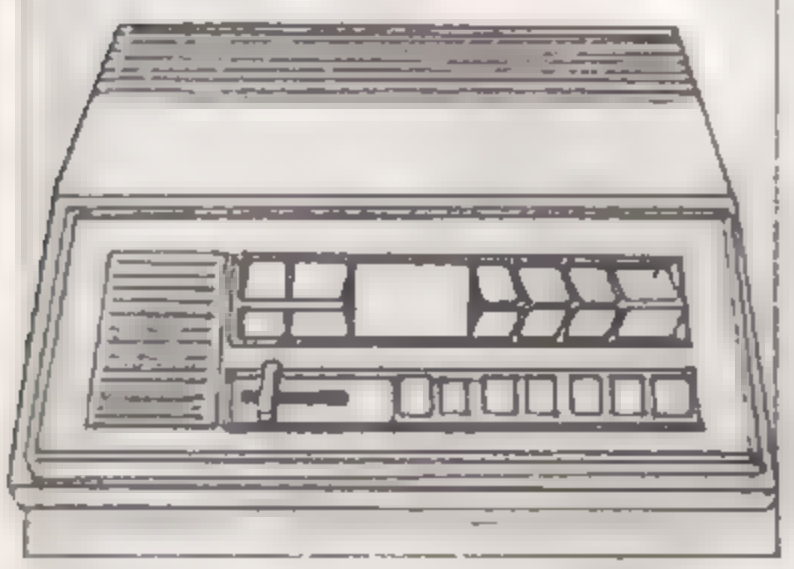
RICHARD!!

SARAH...AND RICHARD...

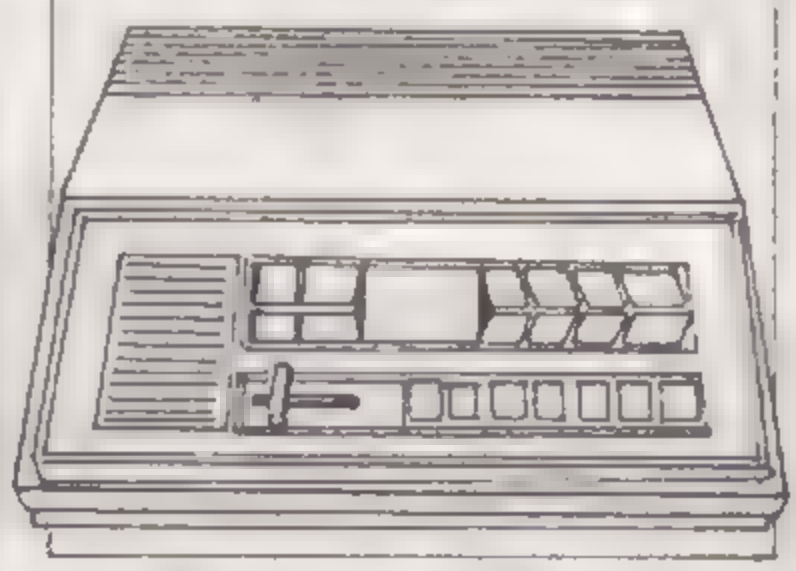
... I HATE RAIN...

A FEW DAYS LATER...

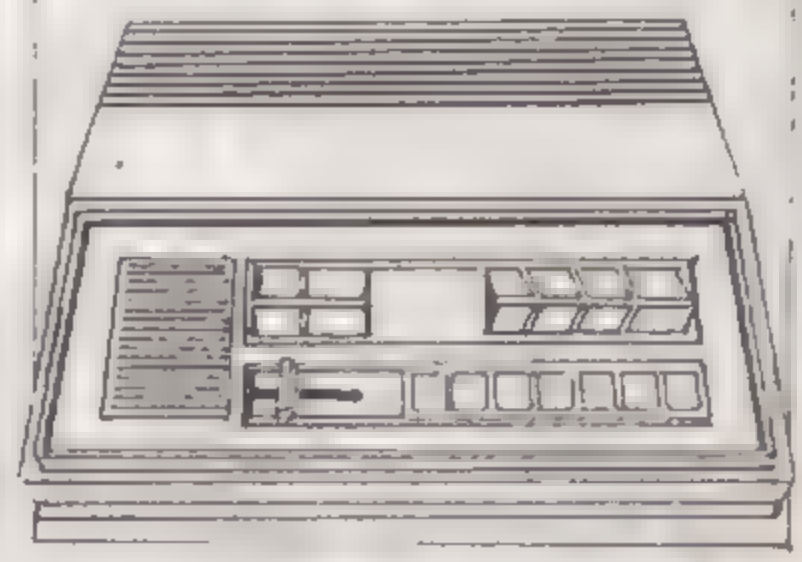
HELLO, THIS IS DANSE St. CLAIR. I'M NOT IN RIGHT NOW, SO PLEASE LEAVE YOUR NAME, THE TIME YOU CALLED, AND A BRIEF MESSAGE. I'LL GET BACK TO YOU. -beeeep-



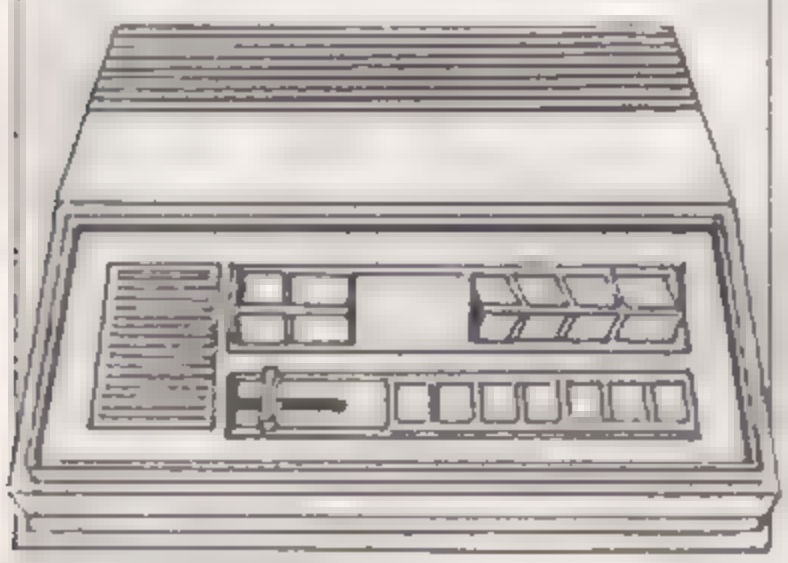
DANSE, THIS IS AUGUST HOLMES, AGAIN. I'M CALLING AT 7:29 pm. THIS IS MY THIRD CALL IN THREE DAYS. I DON'T LIKE TO WAIT FOR AN ANSWER, SO FORGET DINNER. YOU AREN'T THAT SPECIAL AFTER ALL. -beeeep-



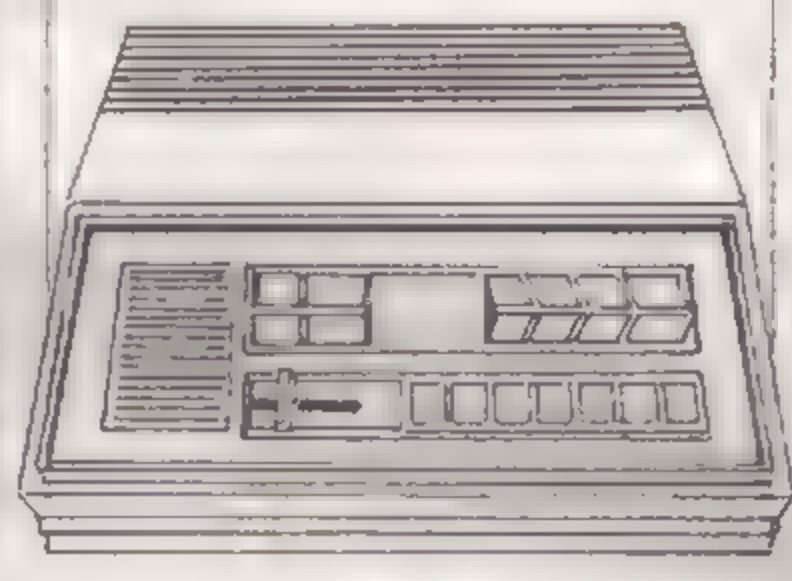
THIS IS JOYCE PRESCOTT FROM THE LEDGER CALLING AT 8:02 pm. I'M GLAD TO HEAR OUR INTERVIEW IS SCHEDULED FOR NEXT MONDAY. I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO IT. -beeeep-



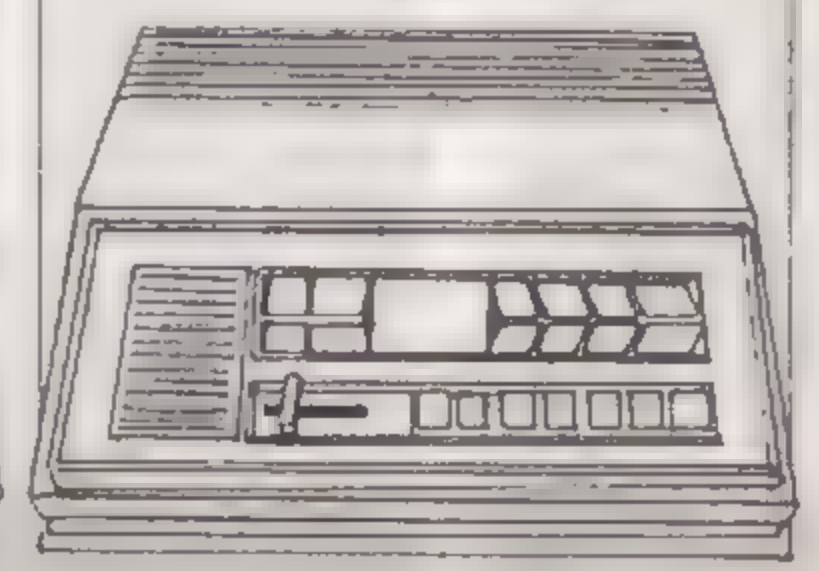
MISS... uh, Ms. St. CLAIR? THIS IS HOWARD RATLEDGE. I CALLED A FEW DAYS AGO, REMEMBER? THE, uh, THE... I WAS THE WRONG NUMBER. Uh, HI. I'LL CALL BACK WHEN I HAVE THE NERVE TO ASK FOR A DATE. OKAY, BYE! -beeeep-



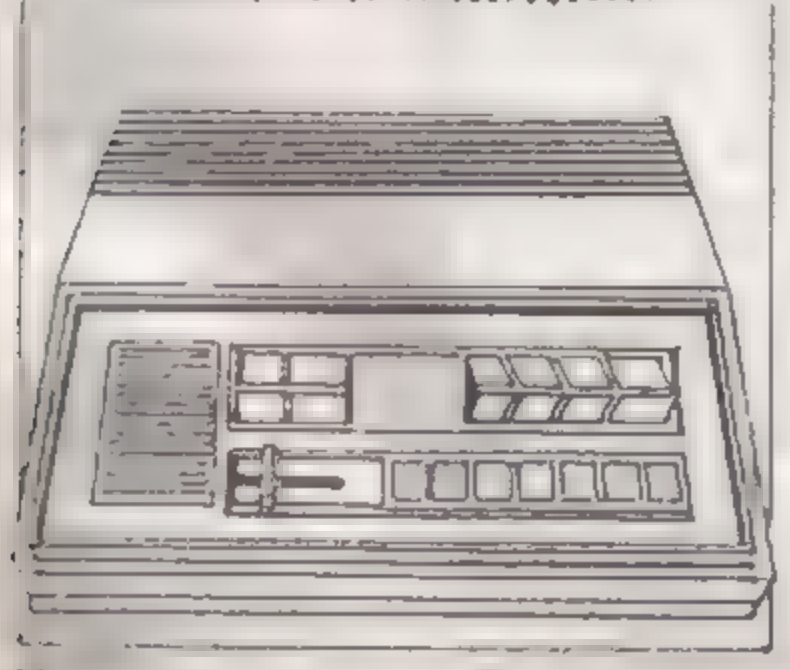
HELLO, DANSE, THIS IS SARAH. I MISSED YOU AT THE HOSPITAL TODAY. I HOPE EVERYTHING'S OKAY. I ALSO HOPE I SEE YOU TOMORROW. THANKS FOR EVERYTHING, DANSE.



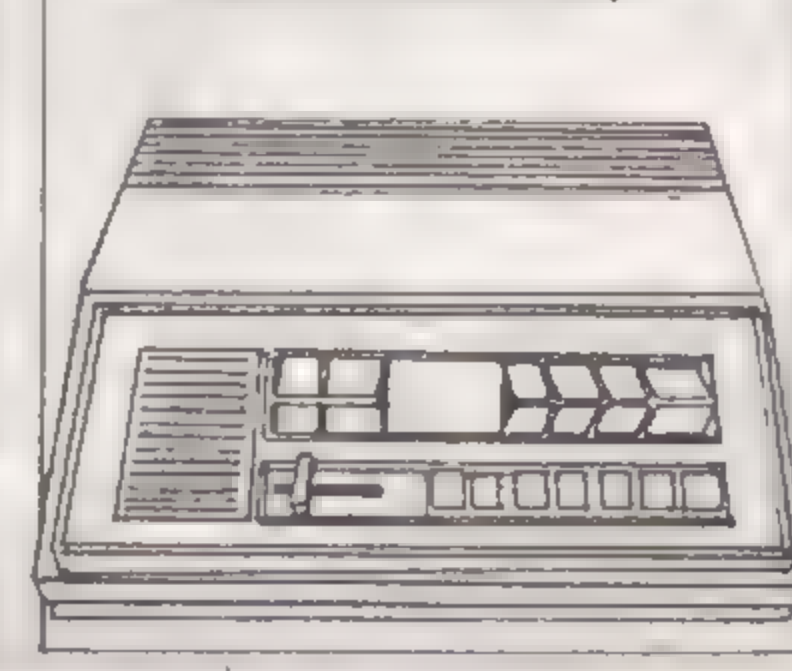
OH, YES, I WANTED TO TELL YOU SOMETHING. I'M GLAD WE'RE FRIENDS. YES, JUST *FRIENDS*. YOU'RE THE BEST, DANSE. I LOVE YOU. GOOD-BYE. -beeeep-



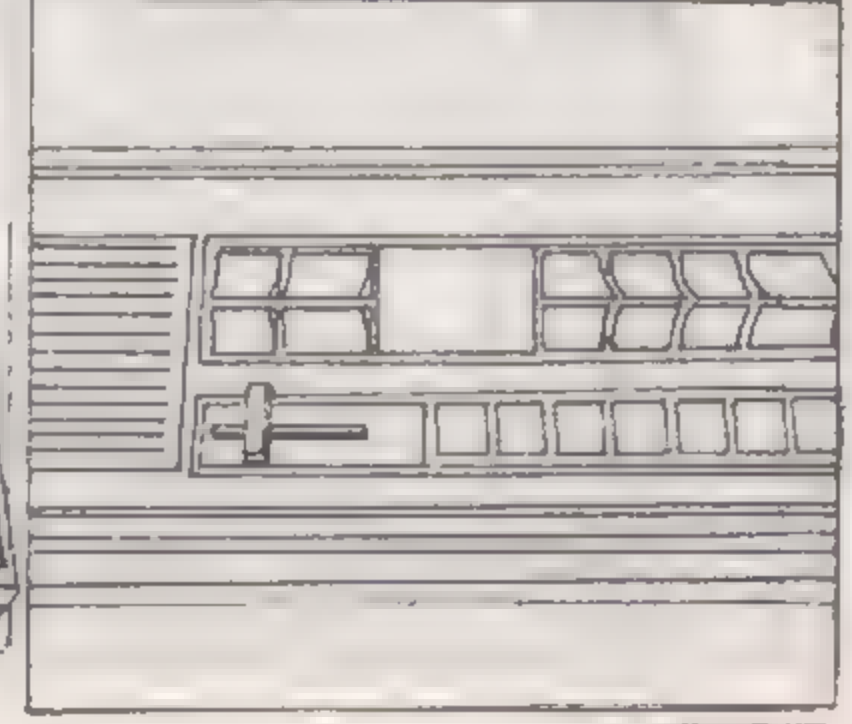
DANSE, THIS IS *MACK LEWIS*. I KNOW I'M THE LAST PERSON YOU EXPECTED TO HEAR FROM, BUT... WELL, I'M SORRY I SAID THOSE THINGS TO YOU. SORRY ABOUT *EVERYTHING*.



I... ahem!... I ...NEED YOUR, um, HELP. SOMEONE'S BEEN LEAVING MESSAGES ON MY MACHINE. IT'S MY... ahem!... ex-, um, EX-LOVER...



I THINK... um... I THINK *HE* WANTS TO KILL ME...



END?

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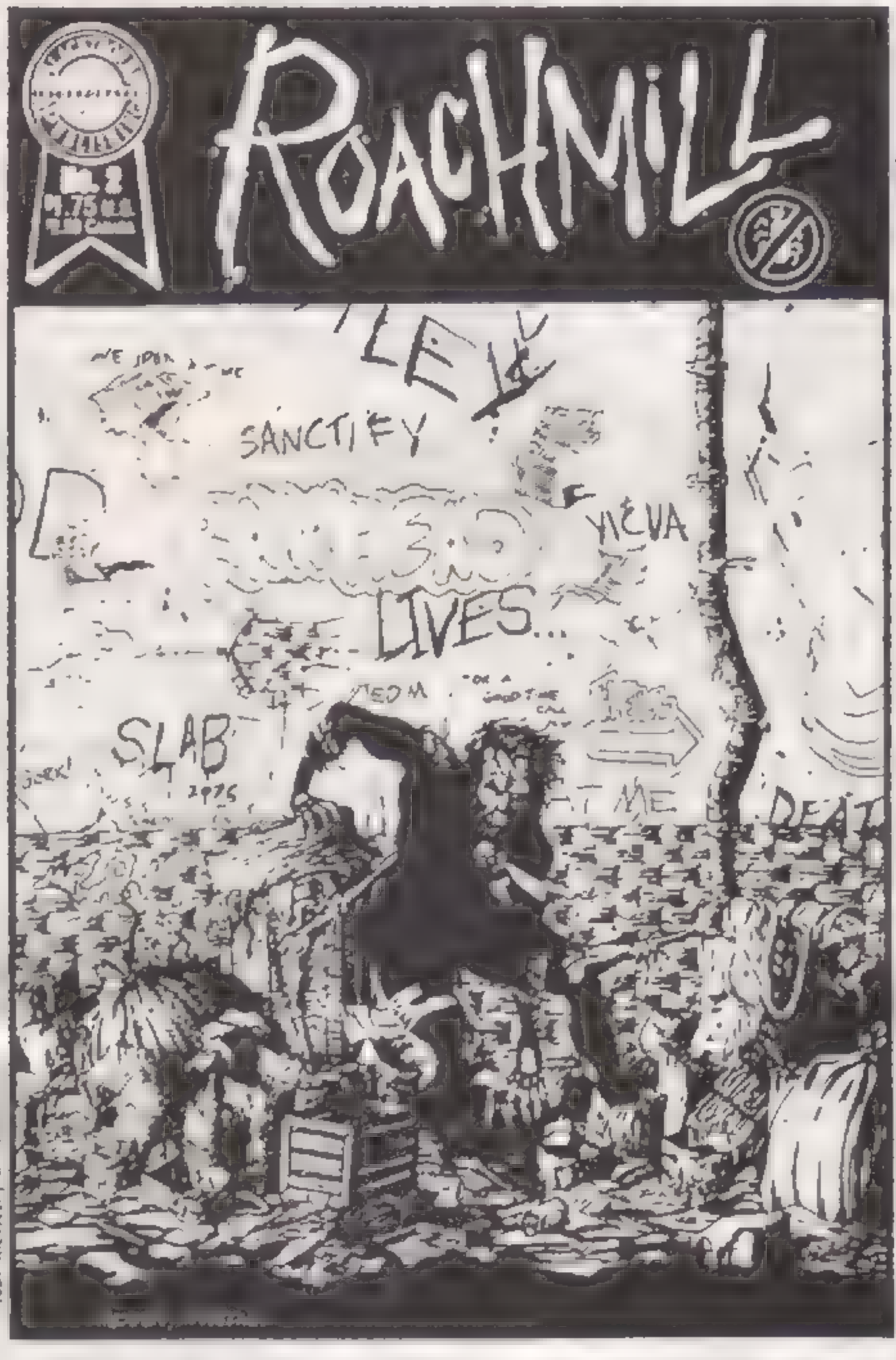

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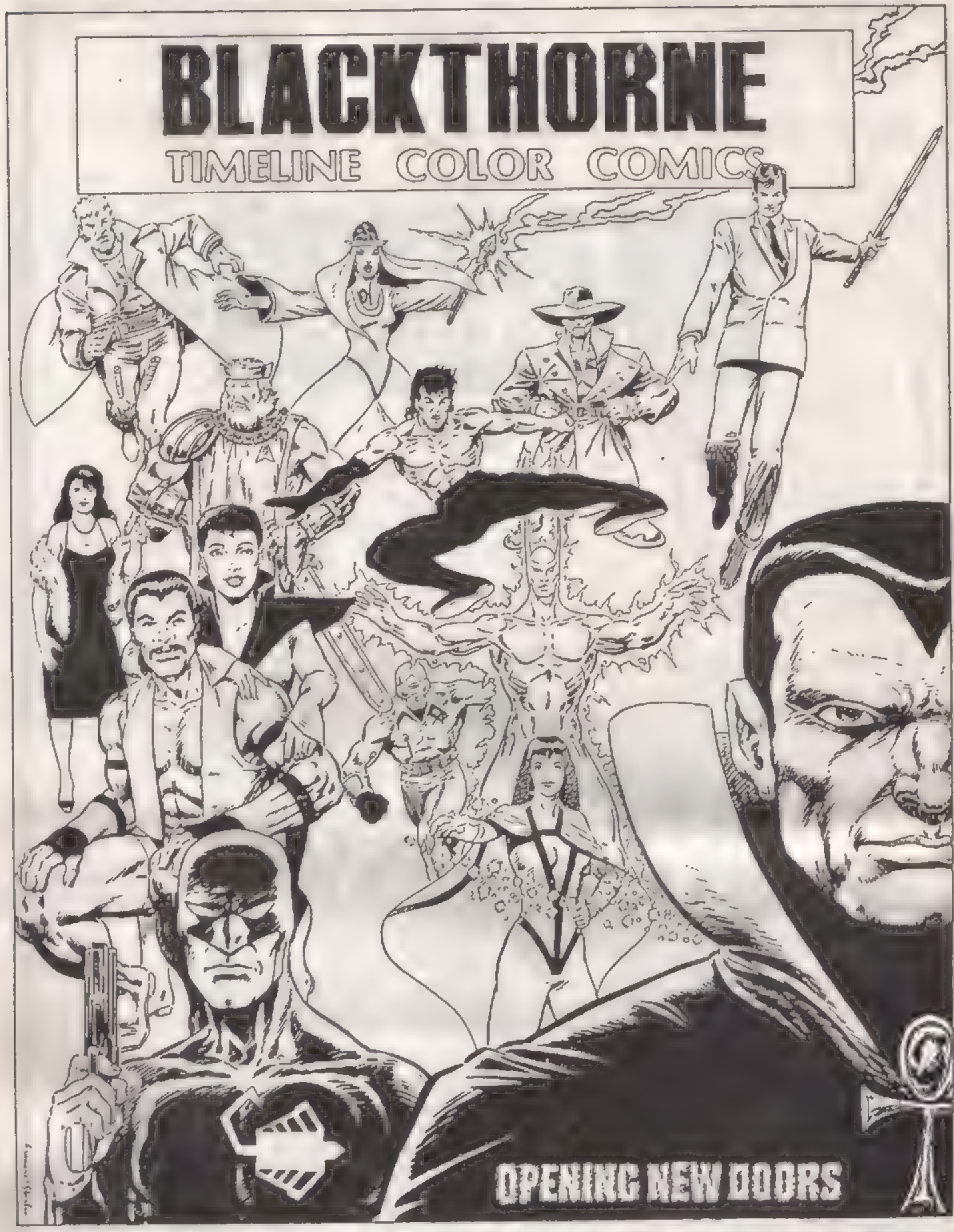
THIS SUMMER



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Danse

"READ THIS FIRST"

(Continued from inside front cover)

families and relatives were present in a powerful show of support.

By this point I was nearly in a state of shock. It was at that point when everthing clicked.

Yes, a story. I'd write a story dealing with that particular subject. I'd present it to an audience and attempt to make them feel what I felt when I watched the program.

Because, you see, to me a *story* is more than a series of interconnected events with a begining, a middle and an end (or, introduction and establishiment of conflict. progression of conflict, climax of conflict, and resolution resolution of conflict). A story *is* all of those things, but a story is also something that makes you feel many different emotions during the course of its reading, and in the end makes you *think* about what you've read. When you finish reading a story, you should have felt happiness, concern, sorrow, anxiety, fear, worry; and when you finish, there should be a degree of *understanding* about what you've exposed yourself to. *That's* a story.

I am not seeking to change or alter anyone's opinion about the issues presented within these pages. Nothing herein should be taken as representative of anyone's opinion who was involved with this project, including the publisher's (I don't know Mr. Schanes' opinion, I didn't ask him).

Your comments on this story are welcome. But when you write, concentrate on the story and nothing else. Please do not say any of us were speaking through the characters, so their opinions and philosophies must be ours as well, and then write a four-page letter in anger saying how I either supported or condemend the actions or lifestyles of homosexuals. Anthing the characters say, thought it may offend you, is said because it is in their personalities to say so. Try to see them as individuals with their own habits and philosophies, just like you and me.

If I *do* make a few of you upset by what I've written in this story, good. That is what I intended. If you get upset, it means you were involved in the story.

If I outright *offend* a few of you during the course of the story and, even after you've read the whole thing you're *still* offended, I apologize in advance. That was *not* my intention. And for the record, I and everyone in this book remain effectively neutral on the topics raised within these pages. If you want to know my opinion, corner me at a convention. I'll be glad to talk to you. You can also send me a letter and ask, and I'll try my best to write you back.

But don't *assume* I feel a certain way and try to get on my case about it. Please try to see the story as an entity unto itself.

Now after a short message from penciller, Darrell Goza, I'll make my closing comments:

Reasons:

There can be many reasons for an artist to take on a story as there are artists to do them. My reason was a relatively selfish one. It wasn't one of the typical flying man, punch-'em-ups that seem to populate American comic books.

I've always wished American comics would deal with contemporary subjects and themes, and this script approaches those subjects with a refreshing, honest insight.

Whether you like it or hate it, I doubt if it will leave you indifferent.

I'd like to dedicate the art in this book to my immediate family: My mother, Catherine; and Phyllis & Kim O., my sisters. And of course, my one and only 'Little Fidget,' niece Katrina.

Thanks Darrell.

I'd personally like to thank my fiancee, Santa Miranda, for her outstanding support, as usual.

Oh yes, check out the back of this book for a very important message. It's a wise saying, and not just intended for *kids*.

That's it everyone. Come back and see us sometime. And write! We listen to you.

Best

Mark Wayne Harris

DON'T

DO

DRUGS!

—Mark & Darrell

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